

HETEROJUNCTION BIPOLAR TRANSISTOR CONTAINING AT LEAST ONE SILICON CARBIDE LAYER

RELATED PATENT APPLICATIONS

This application claims the priority of United States Provisional Patent Application
5 serial number 60/333,258, filed on November 21, 2001, entitled BIPOLAR TRANSISTOR
CONTAINING AT LEAST ONE SILICON CARBIDE LAYER, assigned to Astralux, Inc.,
incorporated herein by reference.

Non-provisional United States Patent Application serial number 10/273,041, filed
October 10, 2002, entitled DOUBLE HETEROJUNCTION LIGHT EMITTING DIODES
10 AND LASER DIODES HAVING QUANTUM DOT SILICON CARBIDE EMITTERS,
assigned to Astralux, Inc., incorporated herein by reference, provides for the fabrication of
silicon-based light emitting diodes using nano-patterning and direct-wafer-bonding.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

15 This invention relates to the field of active solid-state devices, and more specifically
to bipolar transistors, also called semiconductor triodes, that include silicon carbide (SiC).

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Bipolar junction transistors (BJTs) are thought to have been invented in about 1948,
20 for example see United States Patents 2,524,033 and 2,569,347, incorporated herein by
reference, wherein the use of semiconductors such as SiC was mentioned. In addition United
States Patents 2,918,396, 4,945,394, 5,610,411 and 6,329,675, incorporated herein by
reference, are examples of patents that use SiC in BJTs.

A number of different semiconductor-device structures have been published and/or
25 commercially developed. Heterojunction bipolar transistors (HBTs) (see above-mentioned
USP 2,569,347) were made using a variety of different semiconductors in the same device
structure. For example United States Patent 4,985,742 by J. Pankove describes a GaN/SiC
HBT, incorporated herein by reference.

In accordance with the present invention, direct-wafer-bonding (for example see
30 Appl. Phys. Lett. 56, p.737, 1990, by Z. L. Liao and D. E. Mull) provides an elegant and cost

effective alternative for forming wide-bandgap heterojunctions, wherein direct-wafer-bonding is performed using commercially available wafers and standard device processing.

Wafer-bonding of dissimilar semiconductors is a technology that has facilitated the manufacture of red AlInGaP/GaP light emitting diodes (LEDs) (see Appl. Phys. Lett. 56, p. 737, 1990, by Z. L. Liao and D. E. Mull), mirror stacks for long-wavelength VCSELs (see IEEE Photon. Technol. Lett. 7, 1225, 1995, by D. I. Babic et al), and Si/InGaAs p-i-n photodetectors (see Appl. Phys. Lett. 70, 2449, 1997, by B. F. Levine et al) with near-perfect interfaces, wherein the above-mentioned AlInGaP LEDs are manufactured using a high-volume production process, resulting in low cost products.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

This invention provides new and unusual HBT structures that contain at least one SiC layer.

15 In accordance with a feature of this invention, the fabrication of HBTs having one or more heterojunctions utilizes a direct-wafer-bonding process by combining semiconductor materials that have incompatible growth technologies.

Active solid-state devices in accordance with the present invention find utility in a number of fields, including, but not limited to, RF power amplifiers used in wireless communication and radar applications, and power switches that are needed for traction control in electric vehicles. Direct-wafer-bonded bipolar transistors in accordance with this invention can be used as RF power devices and near-DC power switches. Direct-wafer-bonded heterojunctions in accordance with the invention can also be used in thyristors and heterojunction field-effect-transistors (HFETs).

25 SiC is a wide-bandgap semiconductor material that has extraordinary properties, for example high thermal conductivity, high breakdown field, and high saturated electron velocity. SiC can be made with either n-type conductivity or p-type conductivity, and various p-n diodes and n-p-n BJTs have been demonstrated. (For example see (1) Tang Y., Fedison J. B., and Chow T. P., An Implanted-Emitter 4H-SiC Bipolar Transistor with High Current Gain, El. Dev. Lett., Vol. 22, No. 3, pp119-120, 2001; and (2) Ryu S. H., Agarwal A. K., Singh R., and Palmour J., 1800V NPN Bipolar Junction Transistors in 4H-SiC, El. Dev. Lett., Vol. 22, No. 3, pp 124-126, 2001.)

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However, SiC-based HBTs are not known to have been demonstrated prior to the present invention due to problems such as SiC bandgap engineering related to the binary nature of SiC, and due to the difficulty of growing different SiC polytypes together.

This invention provides discrete SiC bandgap engineering using a direct-wafer-bonding process, which process achieves the combination of SiC and Si for bipolar solid-state device applications.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a cross sectional view of a SiC-based HBT in accordance with the invention.

FIG. 2 is a cross section of a SiC-based double heterojunction bipolar transistor (DHBT) in accordance with the invention wherein the bandgap of the collector and the bandgap of the two emitters are larger than the bandgap of the base.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A bipolar transistor includes three distinct semiconductor regions, respectively called an emitter region, a base region and a collector region. A cross-sectional schematic of a two-finger SiC-based HBT 10 in accordance with the present invention is shown in FIG. 1. More generically, HBT 10 (which has two emitter elements and three base elements) has one or more emitter elements and one or more base elements.

HBT 10 includes (1) a first Si n-type emitter layer 11 and its contact layer 12, (2) a second Si n-type emitter layer 13 and its contact layer 14, (3) a p-type Si base layer 15 and its three contact layers 16, 17 and 18, (4) an n-type SiC collector layer 19, and (5) a p-type SiC sub-collector layer 20 having a contact layer 21, wherein sub-collector layer 20 may be more heavily doped than collector layer 19, thus improving the ohmic contact to the collector layer 19.

In the above arrangement, the contact layers to the Si layers may be either poly-Si, contact metals such as Aluminum or tungsten, or a metal silicide.

In operation, HBT 10 is a three-terminal device wherein contact layer 21 provides the device's collector-terminal, the three contact layers 16, 17 and 18 are electrically connected together to form the device's base-terminal, and the two contact layers 12 and 14 are electrically connected together to form the device's emitter-terminal. In the case of an N-

finger HBT 10, the number N of emitter contact layers are electrically connected together to form the device's emitter-terminal, and the base contact layers are electrically connected together to form the device's base-terminal.

5 HBT 10 includes a first interface 31 between emitters 11/13 and base 15, a second interface 22 between base 15 and collector 19, and a third interface 23 between collector 19 and sub-collector 20. In accordance with a feature of the invention, at least one, two, or all three of the interfaces 31, 22 and 23 is a direct-wafer-bonded interface.

For example, emitter-to-base interface 31 may be either a grown interface, an implanted or a diffused interface, whereas both base-to-collector interface 22 and collector-
10 to-sub-collector interface 23 may be direct-wafer-bonded-interfaces.

Within the spirit and scope of this invention there are many variations and combinations of techniques well known to semiconductor device specialists that can be applied in order to fabricate devices as above-described.

As the term is used herein, direct-wafer-bonding is intended to mean a process
15 whereby two smooth and flat surfaces are brought together, in physical contact, in the absence of an intermediate layer or film, and usually with the application of a uniaxial pressure, such that the two flat surfaces are locally attracted to each other by Van der Waals forces, so that the two flat surfaces stick or bond together. The crystallites in the two flat surfaces of a direct-wafer-bonded interface can fuse together at elevated temperatures due to
20 the surface-energy-induced migration and crystal growth, or the formation of bonds, between the two surface species.

Prior to the direct-wafer-bonding, the two surfaces that are to be bonded are processed to produce surface characteristics that facilitate the direct-wafer-bonding of these two surfaces. The two mating surfaces are prepared for direct-wafer-bonding, as is well
25 known to those skilled in the art. Generally, the two surfaces must be clean, they must be flat, and these two surfaces do not contain an intermediate material such as an oxide, such that direct-wafer-bonding can be achieved. Direct-wafer-bonding without the presence of an intermediate oxide layer also facilitates electrical conduction across the bonded interface.

HBT 10 can be made to provide n-p-n conductivity wherein emitters 11 and 13 are n-
30 type Si, wherein base 15 is p-type Si, and wherein collector 19 and sub-collector 20 are n-type SiC, or HBT 10 can be made to provide p-n-p conductivity wherein emitters 11 and 13

are p-type Si, wherein base 15 is n-type Si, and wherein collector 19 and sub-collector 20 are p-type SiC.

5 The n-emitter/p-base/n-collector structure is preferred as this structure is expected to have superior transport properties, due to a higher electron-mobility than hole-mobility in Si and SiC.

In an embodiment of the invention HBT 10 provided a base/collector direct-wafer-bonded heterojunction 22, thus differing from a conventional HBT which employs a grown emitter/base heterojunction.

10 Using Si within emitter regions 11 and 13 and within base region 15 of HBT 10, and using SiC in the collector region 19 and sub-collector region 20 of HBT 10, allows under normal operating conditions that a high electrical field resides within the SiC collector due to the SiC's high maximum electric field before breakdown. Efficient heat removal from SiC-based HBT 10 is assured due to the high thermal conductivity of the SiC.

15 Si base 15 of HBT 10 facilitates good base electron-transport due to the high electron-mobility that is provided by Si. Using Si as the base layer also results in a low base sheet resistance and a low resistivity ohmic p-type contact that base 22 makes with the contacts 16, 17 and 18. The critical p-type base layer should be doped above 10^{17} cm^{-3} and the thickness should be less than 1 micrometer.

20 The emitter/base portion of HBT 10 can be fabricated using standard photolithography and etching (reactive ion etching and wet/or chemical etching). Passivation or protection of HBT 10 can be achieved using silicon oxide or silicon nitride, as is shown at 30.

25 Other HBT structures can be made by changing emitters 11/13 to a material that has a larger bandgap energy than that of the Si base layer 15, for example, but not limited to using SiC, amorphous-Si, amorphous-SiC, or diamond-like carbon for emitters 11,13. Such an HBT structure with two heterojunctions is sometimes called a double heterojunction bipolar transistor (DHBT), shown in FIG. 2.

30 FIG. 2 is a cross section of a SiC-based DHBT 50 in accordance with the invention wherein the bandgap E_{gC} of collector layer 51 and the bandgap E_{gE} of emitter layer 52 is larger than the bandgap E_{gB} of base layer 53. It is also advantageous that the emitter-base heterojunction forms a Type I heterojunction as defined by Weisbuch and Vinter (Quantum

Semiconductor Structures, Academic Press, London 1991, p. 3) to maximize the emitter injection efficiency.

The emitter 52, the base 53, the collector 51 and the sub-collector 20 of the FIG. 2 device can be constructed using the materials described relative to the FIG. 1 device.

5 Advantages of using DHBT 50, as opposed to using the HBT 10 structure above-described relative to FIG. 1, includes increased injection efficiency and increased gain of DHBT 50, while simultaneously maintaining good base-transport, low sheet resistance and good p-type base contact, all while keeping the high field within the SiC drift region.

10 When diamond-like carbon is used in emitters 11/13 of FIG. 1 the resulting heterojunction structure must be p-n-p, until such time as n-type diamond becomes available.

Emitters 11/13 of the FIG. 1 structure can be direct-wafer-bonded, grown or deposited prior to or after direct-wafer-bonding of the Si base 15 to the SiC collector 19. That is, interfaces 31 can also be direct-wafer-bonded interfaces.

15 FIG. 2's DHBT 50 can also involve using a SiGe alloy to form the base layer of an emitter/base heterojunction combination that is direct-wafer-bonded to SiC collector 51. The advantage of this FIG. 2 structure is similar to that above-described. SiGe is a binary semiconductor in which the bandgap depends upon the alloy composition.

20 In accordance with this invention the SiC collector can be increased in thickness beyond that which is possible by growth by direct-wafer-bonding two or more grown collector layers together to form a multi-layer collector.

Direct-wafer-bonding using both polarities of SiC (i.e. Si-Si and Si-C), and using SiC wafers cut on or 3.5 degrees or 8 degrees off the (0001) axis is within the spirit and scope of this invention. Various SiC polytypes (4H, 6H, 3C, 15R.....) can also be used. The SiC should be of either (100) or (111) crystal orientation.

25 Surface morphology and surface preparation procedures at the above-described direct-wafer-bonded interfaces are important. It has been identified that the root-mean-squared surface roughness of such an interface should be better than about 10 Angstroms, as measured by atomic force microscopy. Such a surface roughness can be provided by polishing and in-situ hydrogen etching.

Growing a sacrificial silicon oxide (SiO_2) layer on a surface that is to be direct-wafer-bonded, and subsequently etching the silicon oxide layer off in hydrofluoric acid, improves the surface's morphology and protects the surface immediately prior to direct-wafer-bonding.

5 An issue to be considered when direct-wafer-bonding SiC to Si for vertical device structures is that both materials readily oxidize in air. This oxide needs to be removed. Thus it is preferred that the direct-wafer-bonding and any subsequent annealing step take place in an inert or a reducing atmosphere.

Standard preparation of surfaces to be direct-wafer-bonded includes the use of sacrificial oxides followed by solvent, RCA (for example see W. Kern, D.A. Puotinen, RCA Review, p. 187, June 1970), and electronic grade hydrofluoric acid cleaning.

Both hydrophilic and hydrophobic surfaces were used when direct-wafer-bonding as above-described.

Direct-wafer-bonding as above-described was performed using an all-graphite wafer bonder that provided chemical stability, uniform thermal expansion at high temperatures, and using a process whereby known and calibrated uniaxial pressures were applied.

15 In a non-limiting example of the invention, direct-wafer-bonding was accomplished by applying a pressure of up to about 600 psi and annealed for up to about 60 min at between 500 degrees C and 1000 degrees C in both inert (nitrogen and argon) and reducing (forming gases) atmospheres in order to solidify the direct-wafer-bond. When fabricating HBTs using Si and SiGe it is important that the annealing temperature stay below 700 degrees C to minimize dopant diffusion. Annealing at higher temperatures might be possible using rapid thermal processing by reducing the duration.

20 The following two heterojunction p-n diodes (1) a Si base and a 4H-SiC collector and (2) a Si base and a 6H-SiC collector, both in accordance with this invention, have been demonstrated and exhibit excellent current-voltage characteristics. (100) Si was bonded to Si-face, C-face, on-axis (4H and 6H), 3.5 degrees off (0001) (6H) and 8 degrees off (0001) (4H) SiC.

The invention has been described in detail while making reference to embodiments thereof. However, since it is known that others, upon learning of this invention, will readily visualize yet other embodiments that are within the spirit and scope of this invention, this detailed description is not to be taken as a limitation on the spirit and scope of the invention.